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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, a Senator from the State of New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today, our prayer will be delivered by our guest Chaplain, from the other side of the Hill, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, Chaplain of the United States House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Lord of history and the mystery guiding our future, be present to all the Members of the U.S. Senate today. Gather them in Your Spirit for their meetings. Guide them in their deliberations as they form consensus and lead Your people in the ways of justice and peace. May the human laws enacted by this Government be based upon the dignity of the human person, rooted in Your order of creation, and achieve the destiny You have ordained for the people of this country and the community of nations at this time. May the people of this great Nation be so blessed by You that we become a blessing for the people around the world. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 2, 2002.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. CLINTON thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3018

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I understand that S. 3018 is at the desk and is due for its second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. DASCHLE. I ask that S. 3018 be read for a second time, and then object to any further proceedings on this bill at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3018) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to enhance beneficiary access to quality health care services under the medicare program, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the time until 10 a.m. shall be under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Under the previous order, the first 20 minutes shall be under the control of the Senator from Vermont, Mr. JEFFORDS.

The Senator from Vermont.

THE FORGOTTEN AGENDA

Mr. JEFFORDS. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the state of our Nation.

Our President has asked us to give him the authority to begin a war with Iraq, and I look forward to a full and frank debate on that question.

But today I want to discuss other issues, important issues that are not getting the attention they deserve, an agenda the President would rather not discuss, an agenda I fear is being obscured by gathering clouds of war.

Whether or not to go to war in Iraq is surely a grave and momentous decision, but I fear our President is neglecting other crucial matters here at home: the quiet crisis American families are facing everyday.

In Vermont and across this great land families are hurting. When they send their children to an overcrowded, underfunded school in the morning, they ask, is this the best we can do? When they go to work and see an empty desk beside them they wonder, am I next? And they ask, is this the best we can do? When they see their dwindling retirement accounts and read of endless corporate corruption, they ask, is this the best we can do? When they have to cancel their child's doctor's appointment because they

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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have lost their health insurance coverage, they ask, is this the best we can do? When they send their kids out to play only to realize that the air pollution levels are dangerously high, they ask, is this the best we can do?

Is this the best we can do? Of course not. We can do better. We must do better, because American families deserve better—and they deserve better from their President. In talking about one thing only, the President is forgetting many others. And so today I call on the President to engage this Nation on this forgotten agenda.

Less than a year after this Congress and the President worked to increase the Federal role in elementary and secondary education by passing the No Child Left Behind Act, we are in danger of leaving many more children behind because sufficient dollars will not be forthcoming to see that every child in this Nation receives a quality education.

The lack of funding for our Nation's schools is a disgrace. Across our Nation, headline after headline tells the story of school districts having to cut back staff, end the school day early, and cut short the school year all because of a lack of funding.

More than 25 years ago, the Federal Government promised to pay 40 percent of special education costs for children with disabilities. Today, we only pay 18 percent of the costs. That is not just a broken promise for one of the richest nations in the world, it is an outrage.

Remember, the very reason that the Federal Government has a role in education is because the Congress realized that our national defense depended on our students leading the world in math and science. One of this country's first education bills, passed in the late 1950s, after the Soviets launched Sputnik, it was entitled the National Defense Education Act.

An even more dramatic action occurred after World War II when we passed the GI bill, vastly increasing the Federal contribution to education and narrowing the tremendous educational gap.

A similar gap exists now. Similar action is needed now.

Of the major industrial nations, the United States ranks among the lowest in terms of funding education at the Federal level, providing only 7 percent of the costs. Nations such as Turkey, Korea, Italy, the Czech Republic and Mexico put us to shame in their expenditure on education.

Recent national test scores tell us that 60 percent—60 percent—of 12th graders are below the proficiency level in reading. This is basic reading.

By neglecting education today, we are not only shortchanging our children's opportunities, we are sapping our Nation's future strength.

Right now we have over half a million foreign workers here on H1-B visas. Those are the visas we give to people from other countries to fill jobs within our borders. We shouldn't have

to import workers to fill the high skill, high wage jobs that we have. We should educate our own workers to fill them.

Our economy is faltering. The President has committed to bringing this economy out of recession. After convening an economic summit in Texas last August, which was more show than substance, he hasn't been engaged.

We learned in the last week that incomes declined and the poverty rate increased for the first time in almost a decade. The annual Census Bureau income and poverty report stated that 1.3 million more Americans slipped below the poverty line. This increase means that 11.7 percent of the United States population is defined as living in poverty.

In regard to overall income, the Census Bureau said that the median household income dropped for the first decrease since 1991. In less than 2 years more than two million private sector jobs have been lost.

Our economic growth is the weakest it has been in 50 years.

And for the workers who don't need to worry about their jobs, they are worrying about their savings. More than 50 percent of Americans have investments in the stock market—and they have seen the value of those investments decline by over \$4.5 trillion since last January.

Now is the time to restore confidence in the economy. Now is the time to show leadership—but this administration's economic leadership has been lackluster.

On environmental issues, I fear we are moving backward instead of forward under the Bush administration. The statistics are startling.

Right now in America there are about 30,000 premature deaths related to power plant pollution, about 160 million people breathing unhealthy air, and significantly higher risks of cancer and developmental problems in urban areas from toxic tailpipe pollution.

Think about this: 2,500 Americans face premature death from power plant pollution each month. That's like suffering casualties from Pearl Harbor every 30 days.

Parents are thinking twice before telling their kids to go outside and get some fresh air. First, they have to check on the air pollution alerts.

If global warming proceeds as scientists expect, weather will become increasingly more hostile and difficult to predict.

I was proud to work with the first President Bush on the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990. He called our work, "a new chapter in our environmental history, and a new era for clean air."

Now, this President Bush insists on moving us backward—undoing his father's legacy and our Nation's environmental policy.

This is a dangerous time. We face many threats. They require all of our best judgment and careful deliberation.

Threats of war dominate our headlines. If we were to ignore those threats we would do so at our peril.

So, too, if we ignore the quiet, steady erosion of economic opportunity and well-being here at home.

If we take action in Iraq, Saddam Hussein will rue the day he defied the international community and the world's greatest power. But our greatness rests on more than our military strength. It rests on our ability to meet great challenges whenever and wherever they arise. Great challenges have arisen here at home.

Our men and women in uniform wherever they are—whether they are helping to bring order in Kabul or awaiting orders in Kuwait—deserve more than our pride and our support. They deserve to come home to a nation that is not only free but strong and prosperous.

We have got to address all the problems facing this Nation. Right now we are not. The drumbeat of war cannot and must not drown out the needs of our families, our children and our environment.

I call on President Bush to lead this Nation. One person can make a difference—and change only comes one person at a time.

It would be nice if the world were as simple as foreign and domestic, good and bad—or even Democrat and Republican. But the world is not a simple place and problems do not come along one at a time. Now is the time for leadership, collective will and individual action.

In a rush to solve problems overseas, we must not ignore the problems here at home. They are real, and they deserve our attention.

There has never been a problem that America could not solve if we come together. That is exactly what we need to do, what we should do, what we must do now.

I yield the floor, not with happiness or good feelings but with concern and deep hope that we can work together to save this Nation.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. May I inquire, since the Senator from Vermont has finished his major address on the economy, is it appropriate and do we have the time at this point to continue the comments from this side of the aisle?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority controls the time until 10, and the Senator may speak for up to 10 minutes.

The Senator from Florida.